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ABSTRACT

Second language curricula vary in their relative emphases on process and product and on the control exerted by the teacher and learner. Discourse analysis can be used to gain insight into classroom interaction. One model for this kind of analysis classifies utterances according to the structural predictions created by the preceding utterance, giving four minimal interaction units: initiation (I), response (R), response/initiation (R/I), and feedback (F). The typical classroom interaction takes the form I, R, F. Illocutionary acts (acts through which something is done when being uttered, e.g., "I promise") make up an illocutionary structure here as in other forms of discourse. Discourse may be seen as a goal or as a means in the classroom; the ideal is to achieve both functions. In product-based curricula, the teacher controls discourse, which is then necessarily limited. In process-based curricula, the responsibility of learning is given to the students, who have more illocutionary freedom and whose discourse better approaches the language outside the classroom. (MSE)

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LEVELS OF INTERACTION TEACHER-LEARNER IN DIFFERENT MODELS OF L2 LEARNING: POSSIBILITIES AND IMPLICATIONS.

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1. Learner-centred versus teacher-centred classrooms.

In the discussion about the possibilities of curriculum design for second language teaching it is important nowadays the fact that there is the realisation of a difference between the curricula centering on the learning product and those putting an emphasis on the process. This distinction is very closely linked to the differentiation that has been established between *teacher-oriented* and *learner-centred* teaching. A product-based syllabus (be it grammatical, notional-functional, etc.) has as a characteristic its interventionism and its being extrinsic to the learner. The teacher role in this case is that of a 'transmission teacher', a role that Wright (1987: 67) opposes to that of the interpretation teacher.

This second type, which would correspond to a process-based syllabus, prefers to disperse responsability for learning among the learners. The role of the teacher as an instructor gives way to the consideration of the learner as a centre, and the teacher acts more like an organiser, guide or evaluator. In this way, it would be part of the teacher's task to raise a consciousness of the existence of learning estrategies in the student and to teach him/her how to use them, promoting in this way the learner's autonomy. According to Rubin (1987: 16),

> *"(...) one important role of the teacher would be to provide an environment which facilitates the identification by students of those strategies which*

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work best for them. Another role of the teacher would be to suggest alternative strategies for organizing and storing information (...)"

All these questions point to the dichotomy between, on the one hand, the control exerted by the teacher and, on the other, the initiative of the learner. It is important to point out that aspects as relevant as interaction and participation with a communicative purpose have been related to this distinction between teacher-centred and learner-centred classrooms. No doubt discourse analysis should be revealing in this respect.

2. Discourse analysis: Units, parameters, criteria.

The use of discourse analysis as an instrument for the study of classroom interaction has as one of its starting points the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), who proposed a model for this type of analysis. An essential concept is that of continuous classification (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975: 120): each utterance is classified according to the structural predictions created by the preceding utterance. According to this, we have as minimal interaction units the following: I (initiation), R (respond), R/I (respond / initiate), F (feedback). A simple example could be the following:

A: Hello. How are you?

B: Well. Did you manage to see John?

A: Yes.

B: OK. Good.

Sinclair and Coulthard suggest as a typical classroom exchange the sequence [I R F]. This possibility accepts more variants, but it is the most widely used variety in product-based syllabuses. There also exist other concepts of interest for our central topic.

In the first place, it is important to notice that, apart from this interactional structure imposed by the mentioned units -which Sinclair and Coulthard call *'moves'*, and which are grouped into superior units-, there also exists an *illocutionary structure*.

Illocutionary acts are those acts with a given *illocutionary force* (cf. austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) through which something is done when being uttered (e.g. when we say 'I promise' we are at the same time promising). Speech act theory, which backs all this conception of linguistic use, has given support to methodologies such as the *notional-functional*, which poses interesting implications for classroom discourse. Illocutionary acts make up an illocutionary structure which exists here as in all kinds of discourse. We shall talk about the possibilities that this fact offers later on.

Apart from the coexistence of both an illocutionary and an interactional structure, it is also important to point out the relevance of some parameters of a social or statutary kind in the different interventions of several speakers. We must talk here about the concepts *speaker status* and *speaker role*. According to Gremmo *et al.* (1985: 39):

> *"By* office, *we mean that class of positions in the social structure which is usually ascribed by appointment, attainment or professional qualification.*
>
> Status *is a more general term for a position in the social structure which is defined by a number of parameters of which office (...) is only one (...)*
>
> Role *is the enactment of interactional privileges and duties which are realized by certain types of act. (...)"*

In all interactions, speakers use all the information they have about each other, as much of a social and interactional kind (status and role) as about their interests, affinities, beliefs, etc.

3. Classroom discourse versus other kinds of discourse.

Before getting into what constitutes classroom discourse, it is necessary to clarify some points a little further. The contributions from discourse analysis for L2 teaching may be useful in two ways:

(a) On the one hand, discourse may be seen as an objective, a goal. ie. we may study conversational everyday discourse in the street, at work, etc. in order to define some language goals, a 'product' for our syllabus.

(b) On the other hand, discourse may be seen as a means. In the classroom there exists a kind of discourse that allows for interaction between the teacher and the learner or among the learners so as to promote active work in the classroom. We are then considering discourse as part of the educational process.

If our ideal is to achieve the kind of discourse mentioned in (a) through the use of the kind of discourse mentioned in (b), the logical conclusion is that there should be a convergence of discourse (b) over discourse (a). Our goal is to approximate both.

What are the characteristics which, *a priori*, differentiate them? In principle, normal language discourse is far more varied, according to the situations. Van Lier (1988: 97-98) presents two types of discourse on opposite poles of a scale (see diagram 1): On the one hand we have discourse with many speakers and overlapping interventions, which he characterises as what takes place in an Italian-American dinner table conversation. Everybody talks at the same time. At the other end we have the interaction of a telephone conversation: two speakers, whose turns are scrupulously followed. There exists alternation in the interventions.

DIAGRAM 1

But there also exist other parameters that may characterise one or the other language. Related to the above mentioned concepts of *office, status and role* there appears the consideration of more or less control over the conversation. Some of the speakers take up a role of direction and control, according to their status. 'Normal' conversation has a very wide range of possibilities, from the interaction in which the roles are very well defined and delimited (eg. turn-taking and interventions in Parliament) to casual conversation, where all the speakers talk whenever they consider it appropriate, without conventions (eg. informal conversation with friends) (see diagram 2).

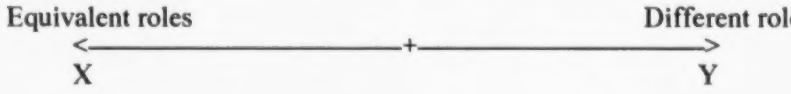

DIAGRAM 2

On the other hand, from an illocutionary point of view, the language used outside the classroom allows an infinite variety of communicative functions, from solemn promises to very informal na. ation and description, according to the communicative situations and contexts in which they are uttered.

Coming back to what we said at the beginning about the role of the teacher, and centering on classroom discourse, we have that in product-based syllabuses the teacher, as previously mentioned, would have a role of direction and organization. His/her status as a teacher provides him/her with a role of controller for all discourse that takes place in the classroom. It should not seem strange then to read statements like the following:

> *"The analysis of classroom discourse has focused on one particular type -the three-phase discourse which is prevalent in teacher-centred classrooms. (...) Known as IRF, exchanges of this type occur in both language and subject lessons where the teacher takes control of the lesson content and management."*
>
> (Ellis, 1985: 146-147)

Many researchers (Gremmo, Holec and Riley, 1978; Riley, 1977) have already stated that this kind of discourse is insufficient, distorted and therefore inhibits learning potentialities. The same thing could be said about the interactions that take place with some educational media, as it is the case with the use of computer programs, in which the software always has the initiative (in most cases it can only formulate questions and evaluate very concrete answers).

If this kind of discourse is limited, can the discourse of process-based syllabuses then be seen as a solution ?

Before answering this in full, let us talk about a new parameter which is very often omitted and which sometimes is given a disproportionate importance if compared to the weight of other aspects of classroom discourse: the use of classroom management language. Apart from the language used in content exercises, we also have this variety, which is used for giving explanations and instructions about the activities to be carried out. If we add the two mentioned models of syllabus to this, we could set up the following matrix:

CLASSROOM MANAG. / LANGUAGE / SYLLABUS	L1	L2
(A) TEACHER-CENTRED	A1	A2
(B) LEARNER-CENTRED	B1	B2

DIAGRAM 3

Faced with the continuous use of L1 in A1 classrooms, many people think that the best solution is to teach using the L2. The result is a classroom that follows the A2 model, in which the learner receives a more varied input, even though he/she has a very limited role in the interaction. A way around this has been, for instance, the use of *role-plays* in communicative syllabuses. However, interaction does not go beyond the simulation stage, with all the implications this has. In addition, it receives a limited treatment in terms of time. Its great advantage, on the other hand, is the chances the student gets to emulate any communicative situation from the real world.

Apart from the use of this kind of syllabus in which the teacher controls classroom discourse completely, we also mentioned at the beginning of this paper how the teacher hands over the responsability of learning to the learners in process-based syllabuses. The teachers stops being the centre, which is now occupied by the learner.

In this modality, the learner keeps considering the teacher's status as superior. But it is so in a different way. He/she does not control classroom discourse any more and the students feel free to make any type of questions. From a speech-act point of view, it is possible for them to have a certain degree of illocutionary richness in their interventions. And, from an interactional point of view, the spectrum of possibilites is even wider, although in occasions they may approach the A pole of the gradation we

showed in diagram 1 (overlapping conversation) and very clearly the X pole of the gradation we also showed in diagram 2 (equivalent roles, a logical consequence of the disappearance of the 'discourse controller').

Nevertheless, it is important to notice the interest of the distinction between B1 and B2 in diagram 3. When the language we use for classroom conversation is L1, the possibilities of interactional richness decrease sharply, since they become dependent on content exercises. No doubt a classroom directed by the students themselves has motivational advantages, but the complete exploitation of interaction can only take place if classroom language approaches the target language.

This has practical implications: when the learners share the L1, they can only feel compelled to use the L2 if they see it as necessary for their learning. Such a situation can only take place with adults, and not without difficulties, since it is always easier for them to use their mother tongue. A learner-controlled syllabus can only be interactionally positive if they feel compelled to use the language they want to learn. Clearly, the best context for this is when the learners do not share a common L1, that is to say, in multilingual classrooms.

4. Conclusion.

As a conclusion, it is necessary to point out the importance of some parameters that are not usually considered in classroom interaction in process-based syllabuses. In particular, the kind of classroom discourse produced by these syllabuses approaches varieties of discourse which exist outside the classroom, while classroom discourse in product-based syllabuses reflects other types, which are also present in the language of the outside world. It is also important to bear in mind the implications -mentioned in section 3- of selecting one language or the other (L1 or L2) for use in the classroom.

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